

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUALA 04678 111043Z

53

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 SSC-01 CIAE-00

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R 110925Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 899

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINR, MY

SUBJ: MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT CABINET CHANGES

REF: K.L. A-168, 12/19/74

1. AUGUST 7 "NEW STRAITS TIMES" (NST) REPORTS MINOR CABINET
RESHUFFLE. FORMER MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND SPECIAL FUNCTIONS
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TENGKU AHMAD RITHAUDDEEN (SURNAME RITHAUDDEEN)
APPOINTED FOREIGN MINISTER; GENERAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PLANNING
MINISTER, DATUK HAJI ABDUL TAIB MAHMUD (SURNAME TAIB) APPOINTED
INFORMATION AND SPECIAL FUNCTIONS MINISTER WHILE RETAINING
PLANNING POST; AND ACCEPTANCE BY PM OF RESIGNATION OF DEPUTY
DEFENSE MINISTER, DATUK HAJI DZULKIFLI HAMID (SURNAME DZULKIFLI).

2. RITHAUDDEEN, AGE 44, A LAWYER AND A MEMBER OF KELANTAN
ROAYL FAMILY, WAS KELANTAN'S LEGAL ADVISER UNTIL 1969.
IN AUGUST 1973 HE WAS APPOINTED MINISTER WITH SPECIAL FUNCTIONS
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PAGE 02 KUALA 04678 111043Z

AND IN DECEMBER 1973 HE WAS DESIGNATED MINISTER OF

INFORMATION AND SPECIAL FUNCTIONS. UPON FORMATION OF NEW CABINET IN SEPTEMBER 1974, RITHAUDDEEN WAS GIVEN PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND PM RAZAK, WHO HAS BEEN FOREIGN MINISTER, TURNED OVER DAY-TO-DAY MFA RESPONSIBILITIES TO HIM (K.L. 4352, 9/6/74). IN HIS CAPACITY AS SPECIAL FUNCTIONS (FOREIGN AFFAIRS) MINISTER, RITHAUDDEEN HAS ATTENDED NUMEROUS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES REPRESENTING GOM, NOTABLY NON-ALIGNED AND ISLAMIC BLOC MEETINGS. IN 1973, PM APPOINTED RITHAUDDEEN TO UNITED MALAY NATIONAL ORGANIZATION (UMNO) SUPREME COUNCIL. HE WAS TOP VOTE GETTER WHEN ELECTED TO SUPREME COUNCIL ON HIS OWN IN JUNE 1975 (K.L. 3531). NST CHARACTERIZED RITHAUDDEEN'S RISE AS SOMEWHAT METEORIC, ADDING THAT HIS ELEVATION IS A MARK OF PM'S CONFIDENCE AND TRUST IN HIM.

4. TAIB, AGE 39, WAS APPOINTED IN 1968 AS ASSISTANT MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY. A SARAWAK MALAY, HE PREVIOUSLY SERVED AS SARAWAK STATE MINISTER OF WORKS AND COMMUNICATIONS, AND HE WAS POLITICALLY CONTROVERSIAL BECAUSE OF HIS STRONGLY ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS BIAS. TAIB WAS MINISTER OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES FROM 1971 UNTIL CABINET RESHUFFLE IN SEPTEMBER 1974; AT THE TIME, THE SHIFT FROM PRIMARY INDUSTRIES TO GENERAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PLANNING (A NEW MINISTRY) WAS A DEMOTION, NOT IN THE LEAST DUE TO TAIB'S COMPETITION WITH PETRONAS CHAIRMAN TENGKU RAZALEIGH FOR CONTROL OF THE NATION'S RESOURCES. HE HAS ALSO LED GOM ECONOMIC AND OTHER MISSIONS TO THE MIDDLE EAST WHERE HE IS REPUTED TO HAVE GOOD CONTACTS. EMBASSY OFFICIALS WHO DEALT WITH HIM IN PRIMARY INDUSTRIES FOUND HIM COMPETENT AND HARD WORKING. NST CHARACTERIZED TAIB AS EXPERIENCED HAND AFTER EIGHT YEARS OF HIGH PUBLIC SERVICE AND DESERVING OF MORE RESPONSIBLE POSITION.

4. ACCORDING NST, DZULKIFLI RESIGNED DUE TO "URGENT" CALL FROM UNITED SABAH NATIONAL ORGANIZATION (USNO) TO RETURN TO SABAH. DZULKIFLI IS MEMBER OF USNO SUPREME COUNCIL AND HAS BEEN APPOINTED ASSISTANT STATE MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, A POST VACATED RECENTLY BY DATUK SALLEH SULONG WHO JOINED SABAH'S NEW OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTY, BERJAYA. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 KUALA 04678 111043Z

DZULKIFLI IS CONSIDERED CLOSE TO SABAH CHIEF MINISTER TUN MUSTAPHA, AND HIS POLITICAL FUTURE WILL BE CLOSELY TIED TO SABAH EVENTS. SEE REF AIRGRAM FOR FURTHER BIO ON DZULKIFLI. DILLON

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